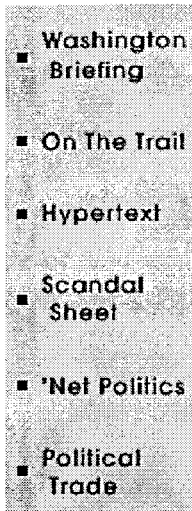
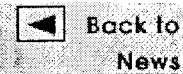




Associated Press



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Prepared Text of Reeve Speech

Monday, Aug. 26, 1996
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Prepared text of remarks by Christopher Reeve, actor and activist, at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago on Monday night:

Over the last few years, we've heard a lot about something called family values. And like many of you, I've struggled to figure out what that means but since my accident, I've found a definition that seems to make sense. I think it means that we're all family, that we all have value. And if that's true, if America really is a family, then we have to recognize that many members of our family are hurting.

Just to take one aspect of it, one in five of us has some kind of disability. You may have an aunt with Parkinson's disease. A neighbor with a spinal cord injury. A brother with AIDS. And if we're really committed to this idea of family, we've got to do something about it.

First of all, our nation cannot tolerate discrimination of any kind. That's why the Americans with Disabilities Act is so important, and must be honored everywhere. It is a civil rights law that is tearing down barriers both in architecture and in attitude.

Its purpose is to give the disabled access not only to buildings, but to every opportunity in society. I strongly believe our nation must give its full support to the care givers who are helping people with disabilities live independent lives.

Sure, we've got to balance the budget. And we will. We have to be extremely careful with every dollar that we spend. But we've also got to take care of our family - and not slash programs people need. We should be enabling, healing, curing.

One of the smartest things we can do about disability is invest in research that will protect us from disease and lead to cures. This country already has a long history of doing just that.

When we put our minds to a problem, we can usually find solutions. But our scientists can do more. And we've got to give them the chance. That means more funding for research. Right now, for example, about a quarter-million Americans have a spinal cord injury.

Diane said
to let you
know all
the convention
speeches are
on email.

Our government spends about \$8.7 billion a year just maintaining these members of our family. But we spend only \$40 million a year on research that would actually improve the quality of their lives, get them off public assistance, or even cure them. We've got to be smarter, do better. Because the money we invest in research today is going to determine the quality of life of members of our family tomorrow.

During my rehabilitation, I met a young man named Gregory Patterson. When he was innocently driving through Newark, N.J., a stray bullet from a gang shooting went through his car window - right into his neck - and severed his spinal cord. Five years ago, he might have died. Today, because of research, he's alive.

But merely being alive is not enough. We have a moral and an economic responsibility to ease his suffering and prevent others from experiencing such pain. And to do that: we don't need to raise taxes. We just need to raise our expectations.

America has a tradition many nations probably envy: we frequently achieve the impossible. That's part of our national character. That's what got us from one coast to another. That's what got us the largest economy in the world. That's what got us to the moon.

On the wall of my room when I was in rehab was a picture of the space shuttle blasting off, autographed by every astronaut now at NASA. On the top of the picture it says, "We found nothing is impossible." That should be our motto. Not a Democratic motto, not a Republican motto. But an American motto. Because this is not something one party can do alone. It's something that we as a nation must do together.

So many of our dreams at first seem impossible, then they seem improbable, and then, when we summon the will, they soon become inevitable. If we can conquer outer space, we should be able to conquer inner space, too. The frontier of the brain, the central nervous system, and all the afflictions of the body that destroy so many lives, and rob our country of so much potential. Research can provide hope for people who suffer from Alzheimer's. We've already discovered the gene that causes it.

Research can provide hope for people like Muhammad Ali and the Rev. Billy Graham who suffer from Parkinson's. Research can provide hope for the millions of Americans like Kirk Douglas, who suffer from stroke. We can ease the pain of people like Barbara Jordan, who battled multiple sclerosis.

We can find treatments for people like Elizabeth Glaser. Whom we lost to AIDS. And now that we know that nerves in the spinal cord can regenerate, we are on the way to getting millions of people around the world like me up and out of our wheelchairs.

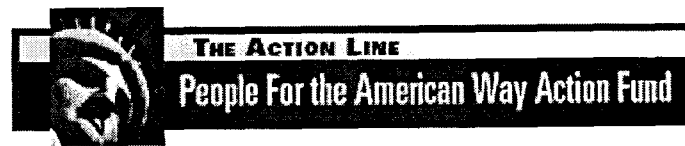
Fifty-six years ago, FDR dedicated new buildings for the national institutes of health. He said that "the defense this nation seeks, involves a great deal more than building airplanes, ships, guns, and

bombs. We cannot be a strong nation unless we are a healthy nation." He could have said that today.

President Roosevelt showed us that a man who could barely lift himself out of a wheelchair could still lift a nation out of despair. And I believe - and so does this administration - in the most important principle FDR taught us: America does not let its needy citizens fend for themselves. America is stronger when all of us take care of all of us. Giving new life to that ideal is the challenge before us tonight.

Thank you very much.

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